



ECO-NEIGHBORHOOD TOOLKIT



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ENVIRONMENTAL
COLLABORATION
OFFICE

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CLIMATE CHANGE IN WISCONSIN

Modern climate change is occurring at an unprecedented and alarming rate. The main driver behind climate change today is human activity, which has increased carbon dioxide in the air to levels higher than anything seen in at least 800,000 years. An increase in greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide causes an increase in the earth's temperature.

Climate change has and will continue to present risks to communities. Wisconsin will face extreme heat, heavy downpours, and flooding that will affect infrastructure, health, agriculture, forestry, transportation, and air and water quality. Climate change will also exacerbate a range of risks to the Great Lakes.

Acting on climate change means both reducing our use of fossil fuels and proactively planning to adapt to future changes. Citizens and businesses have a role to play in demanding effective action at all levels of government, using the climate action programs that are currently available, and making personal and business decisions that reduce energy waste.

GOOD NEWS | The City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity was created in 2019 to make recommendations on how to reduce community-wide net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 45% by the year 2030 and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 or sooner, as well as reduce racial and income inequality by assuring that greenhouse gas reduction investments and policies create the maximum number of permanent living wage green jobs for people with limited economic opportunity.

The Milwaukee Climate & Equity Plan includes the following 10 Big Ideas:

1. Residential Energy Efficiency
2. New Net Zero Energy Homes
3. Commercial Building Energy Benchmarking
4. Electric Vehicles
5. Reduced Vehicle Miles
6. Net Zero Electric Grid
7. Nature in the City
8. Food Waste Reduction
9. Green Jobs Accelerator
10. Resilience Ambassadors

ECO will continue to inform the public of the plan's progress and share how residents can get involved.

HOW TO USE THE ECO-NEIGHBORHOOD TOOLKIT

The **Environmental Collaboration Office** (ECO) strives to make Milwaukee a world class eco-city. ECO develops practical and racially equitable solutions that improve people's lives and the economy while working to protect and restore the natural ecosystems that support our long-term prosperity. ECO collaborates with the community, develops global partnerships, and offers award-winning programs.

The **ECO-Neighborhood Initiative** was developed to support the amazing community organizers who are already making an impact in their communities. The Environmental Collaboration Office understands that community collaboration is key to achieving its sustainability goals, which led to the development of the ECO-Neighborhood Toolkit.

The mission of the ECO-Neighborhood Initiative is to concentrate enough eco-activities in a neighborhood to inspire neighbors to continuously practice ecologically-friendly behaviors while creating a lasting visible impact. The toolkit is a resource that functions as a catalyst for community organizers to drive collective green actions in their communities. The goal is to connect community organizers to existing environmental programs offered by the City of Milwaukee and partner organizations so that we can work together for greater impact.

Join Lindsay Heights and Sherman Park as ECO-Neighborhoods by taking the following steps within the span of one year:

- Assemble a team of four community members to serve as Sustainability Ambassadors and work with ECO on the **ECO-Neighborhood Memorandum of Understanding**.
- Complete three neighborhood beautification projects with your neighborhood.
- Host two Milwaukee Energy Efficiency Program information sessions.
- Host three sustainable community events with ideas from this toolkit. Most of the programs listed in this document have representatives that are willing to present on the various programs to your neighbors.

The benefits of becoming an ECO-Neighborhood include: improved condition of your neighborhood and deeper engagement with your neighbors, an increase in community assets available to you, the committed support of ECO staff throughout the process, and a more environmentally-friendly neighborhood.

Get started today!



The ECO-Neighborhood Toolkit was created with grant funding through the Environmental Protection Agency State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreement Program.

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AIR

An ECO-Neighborhood is one that reduces its environmental impact on the atmosphere—the air we breathe. The atmosphere also contains other gasses that balance the earth’s temperature and climate to support life. Burning fossil fuels to create electricity and heat that power our homes and buildings, as well as fuel our cars and trucks, pollutes the air and contributes to global warming.

Focus on neighborhood action that reduces the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the air.

Cleaner air also results in healthier communities. By reducing air pollution levels, we can reduce the burden of disease from stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma.

GOOD NEWS | The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources finds that overall air quality in Wisconsin communities continues to improve.

[Find Wisconsin Air Quality Monitoring Data here.](#)

HOW TO TAKE ACTION:



Switch to Clean & Affordable Energy in Your Home

- Energy Efficiency
- Renewable Energy



Switch to Cleaner Modes of Transportation

- Public Transportation
- Carsharing, Ridesharing, & Vanpooling
- Bikeshare
- Electric Vehicles
- Safer Driving



How to Switch to Clean & Affordable Energy in the Home

Producing and using electricity more efficiently reduces both the amount of fuel needed to generate electricity, as well as the amount of greenhouse gases and other air pollution emitted as a result.

Energy efficiency improvements to homes and buildings also decrease your electric bill and make the space more comfortable during the winter and summer months. Electricity from renewable resources such as solar, geothermal, and wind generally does not contribute to climate change or local air pollution since no fuels are burned in the process.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The **Milwaukee Energy Efficiency program** makes it easy and affordable to update your City of Milwaukee home to make energy-saving upgrades such as insulation, air sealing, furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, air conditioners, and now, windows. By combining an accessible, low-interest loan with incentives from Focus on Energy, Me2 can help you decrease your costs and increase your savings. On average, participants have reduced their annual energy use by 30%.

Find a full list of programs available for current and prospective homeowners, investors, and non-profits on the City's **Housing Help** page.

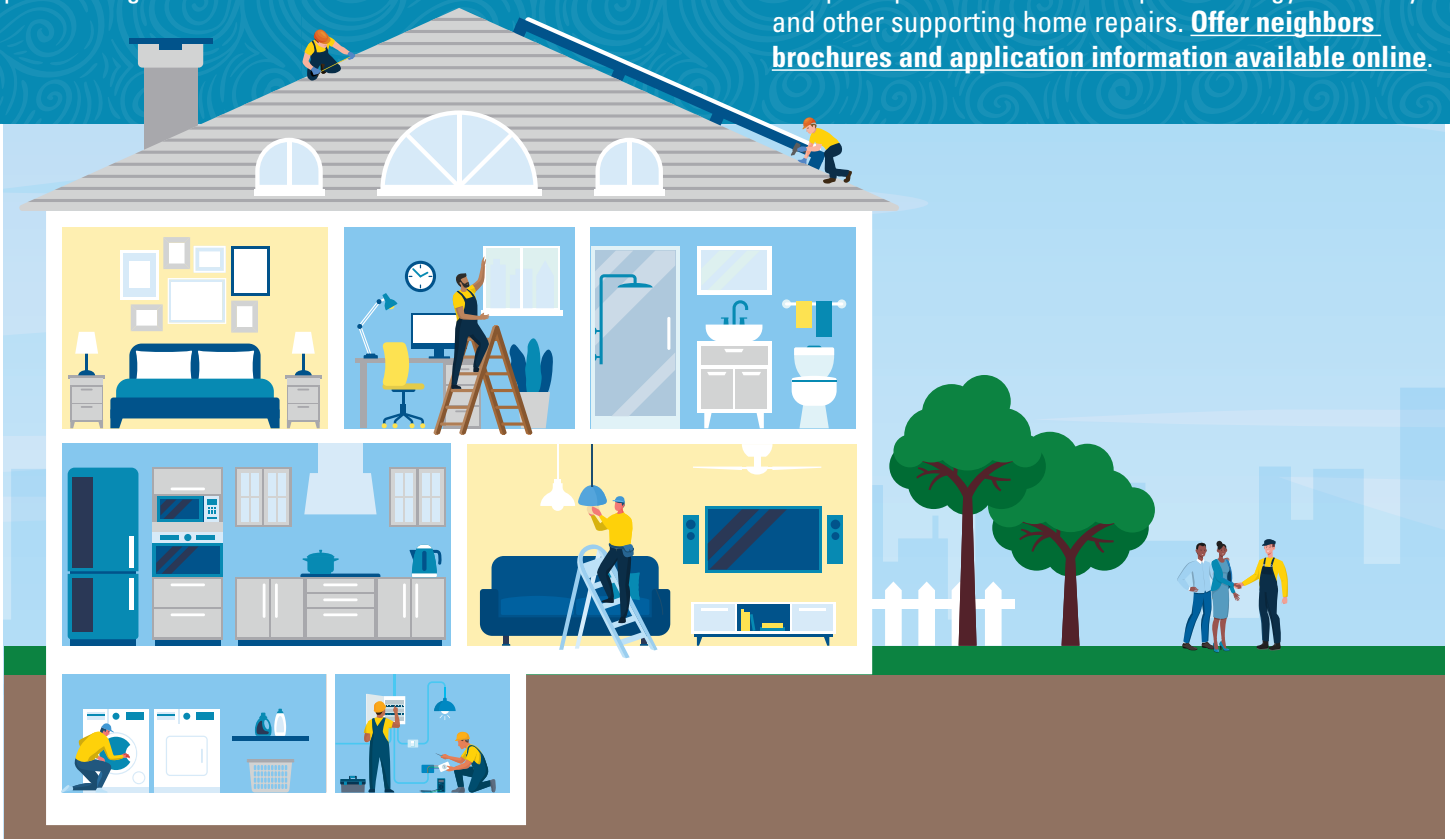


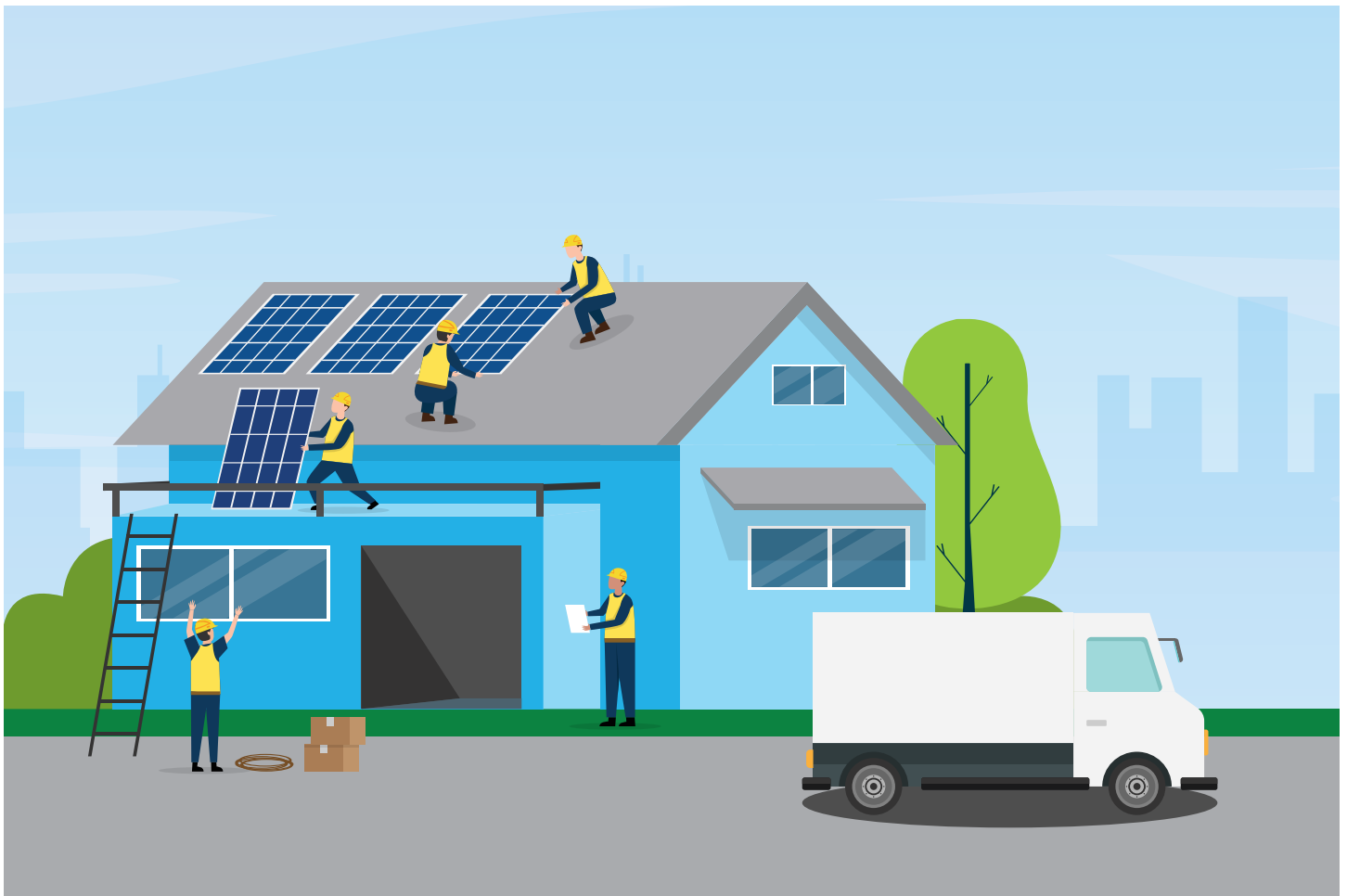
HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood by holding informational group sessions to explain the Milwaukee Energy Efficiency program and gauge interest. Encourage neighbors to sign up at the same time to complete the process together.

Other energy efficiency programs include the **Weatherization Assistance Program** and **Focus on Energy** programs.

You can also make neighbors aware of other Milwaukee housing repair programs available through the City and non-profit partners that can help with energy efficiency and other supporting home repairs. **Offer neighbors brochures and application information available online.**





RENEWABLE ENERGY

The City's [Milwaukee Shines](#) solar program partners with the [Midwest Renewable Energy Association](#) and neighborhood associations to coordinate neighborhood solar group buys and solar financing in the City of Milwaukee.

A Solar Group Buy is a group of community members that come together to use their collective buying power to save on the total cost of the equipment and services involved in going solar. The more residents that participate, the lower the cost of solar will be for everyone in the group. All Southeastern Wisconsin residents and business owners are eligible to take part.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood by coordinating a Solar Group Buy with support from Milwaukee Shines and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association. Hold neighborhood information sessions and distribute marketing materials to the community. You can use [Google Sunroof](#) to explore the solar potential for homes in your neighborhood.

Advocate with your neighborhood to support solar energy purchasing options like community solar. Community solar is an option available in other states that allow homeowners to buy an off-site solar project to get their power. Although community solar is not currently offered by We Energies, you can organize a group of neighbors to write to your utility, newspaper, or state legislators to make this option available in Milwaukee.



How to Reduce Emissions in Transportation

The largest contributor of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions is from transportation. Burning fossil fuels like gasoline and diesel releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Greenhouse gas buildup causes the Earth's atmosphere to warm, resulting in climate change.

Driving less means less air pollution. Plus, less driving means paying less for ongoing operating costs like oil changes and repairs, gas, and parking fees. Consider alternatives for getting around the city.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The **Milwaukee County Transit System** consists of a fleet of 350 clean-diesel buses and offers riders 49 routes. Milwaukeeans can reduce their carbon emissions by 4,800 pounds a year by riding the bus instead of driving a car. You can plan your route with WisGo in the Umo App. Use the M•CARD to load your fare and pay for trips.

Milwaukee's streetcar, **The Hop**, offers free rides in downtown Milwaukee, the Historic Third Ward, East Town, and the Lower East Side. [You can track its location online.](#)



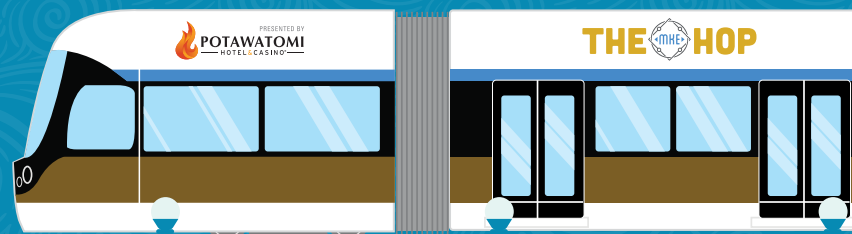
HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood by advocating for expanded public transportation options. Transit advocacy groups work to positively influence public policy on the local and state levels. Contact any of the following groups directly to voice your neighborhood's support of public transit:

- **Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission** is the official metropolitan planning organization and regional planning commission for the 7-county Southeastern Wisconsin area.
- **Regional Transit Leadership Council** is Southeastern Wisconsin's united voice and platform for multimodal transportation that unites public and private sector

leaders around strategies and actions to connect the region with robust multi-modal transportation options.

- **Transit Plus Advisory Council**'s mission is to serve as an advocate for persons with disabilities to ensure the availability of a quality transportation system so that Transit Plus clients may enjoy full participation in their community, work, medical care and recreational activities.
- **Transit Riders Union** is an organization of bus riders advocating for better transit in the Milwaukee area.



CARSHARING, RIDESHARING, & VANPOOLING

Zipcar is a carsharing program in Milwaukee that allows anyone 21 years of age or older with a valid driver's license to rent a car for \$11 an hour or \$91.50 for the day with gas included. Students 18 and older can also rent a Zipcar. Sign up online, download the Zipcar app, and book your trip.

The State of Wisconsin offers a free **Rideshare** program. You can save money on transportation costs, reduce emissions, and lessen the stress of your commute. Options are available to ride, drive, or bike. Rideshare serves all of Wisconsin and bordering counties in neighboring states, including Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota.

Once you register for the program, you can click on the Commute Calendar to track your commute each day and run a report to compute your cost savings, pollution, and greenhouse gas reductions.

BIKESHARE

One great way to ditch the car is to hop on a bike instead. You can take your own or use the **Bublr bikeshare system**. Riders must be at least 14 years old to participate. Rides start at \$3. Subsidized and discounted passes are provided to income-qualified individuals.

Bublr offers an Adaptive Cycle pilot program to ensure that people with different abilities can still access the bike system. Bublr also provides ebikes in addition to traditional bikes, which offer electrical assistance to help riders travel longer distances and more challenging terrain with greater ease.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood by encouraging neighbors to sign up together to commute. To get started, register for the Rideshare program, run a match list, and contact matches to find a carpool or Bike Buddy. A carpool group is two or more people who share a ride. You are not required to have a car or be a driver to participate in a carpool. Bike Buddies are two or more cyclists that bike to work together.

Ridesharing can take place outside of the program as well. Encourage neighbors who commute to the same area, work at the same organization, or take children to the same schools to set up a carpool or bike riding schedule.

The State also provides alternate transportation for state and non-state employees who frequently commute to Madison with **vanpooling**. All riders share in the expense of commuting through a biweekly fee to cover maintenance, insurance, and gas for the vans. The program is self-insured regarding collision and comprehensive insurance.

Suggest neighbors join an existing pool or form their own. Identify a driver, coordinator, and riders. By Wisconsin Statutes, the only requirement is that there be a state employee on board. You determine your own time schedule and route. For questions, contact the State of Wisconsin Vanpool Office: 1-800-884-VANS (8267).



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood to encourage first-time riders to try Bublr. The bikeshare system has programs such as pass giveaways, safety education, and the Bublr mileage challenge to encourage participation. Contact Bublr to learn about programs and set up workshops with your community.

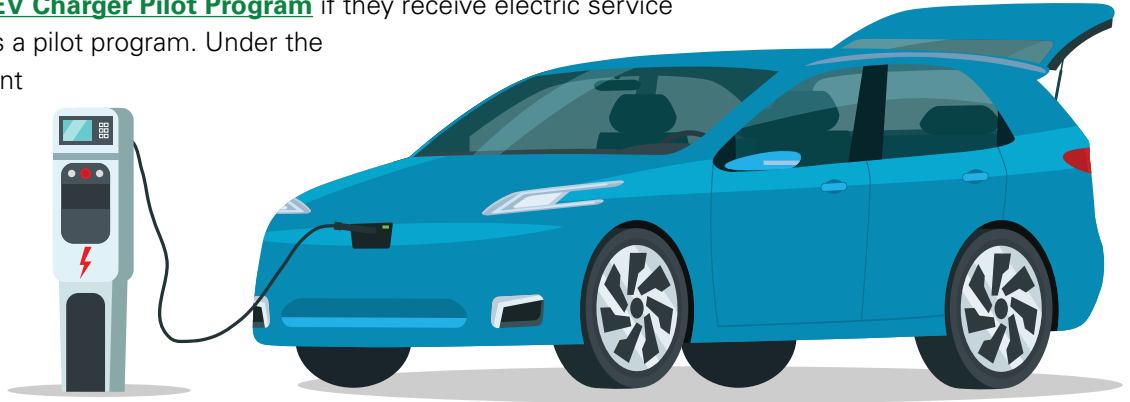
Share the City of Milwaukee's **online bike trails and maps** and get your neighbors involved with the **Wisconsin Bike Fed's** bike rides, events, and volunteer opportunities.



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Electric vehicles, if widely adopted, have the potential to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and improve neighborhood air quality. The City's Environmental Collaboration Office is working to expand access to electric vehicle charging. The [U.S. Department of Energy Alternative Fueling Station Locator](#) is a great resource to find alternative fueling stations in the U.S. and Canada. [Plugshare](#) is another helpful locator and route planner.

Residents looking for assistance with charging infrastructure in their home can take advantage of We Energies' [Residential EV Charger Pilot Program](#) if they receive electric service from the utility. Note, this is a pilot program. Under the program, charging equipment and maintenance is supplied. Homeowners have the option to pay for the charging equipment upfront or as a monthly cost to their energy bill.



SAFE DRIVING

Well-designed streets are not only beneficial to drivers, they also help encourage more walking, biking, and other forms of mobility. The City's [Neighborhood Traffic Management Program](#) offers solutions to residents who are dealing with traffic safety problems on residential side streets. At request, the Department of Public Works will assess the need for speed bumps, traffic circles, or other calming efforts to slow traffic and create a safer community environment.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize by filling out the online Neighborhood Traffic Management Request form, then printing the online Neighborhood Signature Sheet to collect signatures from residents on your block.

The Department of Public Works will perform a 48-hour

speed study and traffic count at the location. Once the data is processed, Public Works will contact you with its results and ways to fix the problems. The Department of Public Works will also prepare an assessed cost for each property owner. As part of the usual public hearing process, each property owner can vote on the proposed traffic calming project.





An ECO-Neighborhood is one that reduces its environmental impact on the land, or the earth's lithosphere, which we depend on to grow food and renewable resources, provide shelter, and offer habitat for wildlife. Promoting ecological land use practices, conserving and restoring green spaces, and cleaning up waste and pollutants are all valuable practices in protecting our land resources.

Focus on neighborhood action that reduces the amount of pollution and degradation to the land.

Urban green spaces, such as parks and residential greenery, can promote mental and physical health by providing relaxation and stress relief, stimulating social cohesion, supporting physical activity, and reducing exposure to air pollutants, noise, and excessive heat.

GOOD NEWS | Milwaukee has created a roadmap for adding the equivalent of 143 acres of green space throughout the city. By implementing green infrastructure, Milwaukee will add about 36 million gallons of stormwater storage to help manage heavy rainfall and flooding. [Read the City of Milwaukee Green Infrastructure Plan.](#)

HOW TO TAKE ACTION:



Increase Access to Green, Healthy Spaces

- Community Gardening
- Natural Lawn Care, Native Landscaping, & Rain Gardens
- Tree Planting
- Pollinator-Friendly Practices
- Waste Cleanup



Contribute Less Waste to the Landfill

- Reduce
- Reuse & Repair
- Recycle & Compost



How to Increase Access to Green, Healthy Spaces

The City of Milwaukee's **ECO-Neighborhood Program** offers a holistic approach to community engagement by supporting residents' efforts to activate and maintain safe, accessible, and active community green spaces. This program helps to support neighborhood redevelopment by restoring blighted vacant lots into community assets, strengthening and expanding Milwaukee's local food supply chain, and increasing resident quality of life and green job creation. Don't forget to engage with ECO early in the process for support and resources as you transform your community into an ECO-Neighborhood.

COMMUNITY GARDENING

A **community garden** is "any use of land or premises for the growing of crops, plants or other vegetation by a group of individuals or by a public or non-profit organization." Gardens are an excellent way to create community, provide fresh and free produce, and improve neighborhood health and aesthetic.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize by applying for a no-cost permit from the City's **Development Center**. Contact **Groundwork Milwaukee** at 1-414-763-9947 with questions and for help filling out the permit application. Groundwork can help you site and plan the garden and aid in accessing City water hydrants for watering.

Email, mail or drop off the application with Yves LaPierre, Department of City Development (DCD), Real Estate; 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI 53202. Staff will forward the application to the district alderperson.

Don't just stop at community gardens—help improve green space and green education opportunities at nearby schools. **The Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee** is a network of K-12 educators, non-profit and for-profit environmental professionals, and

institutional and philanthropic entities with interests in triple-bottom-line green infrastructure projects supporting schools. Get involved with public meetings and conferences to turn paved space into green schoolyards that create urban biodiversity, improved stormwater management, and meaningful STEAM curricular connections. Students and family members can also take part in the **EcoLiteracy Challenge** to support their school and reduce their environmental impact at home.

The Urban Ecology Center offers community garden beds at two of their three locations, Riverside Park and Menomonee Valley. Multiple sizes are available and handbooks are located online for assistance in making the most of your plot space. **Information can be found on their website.**

MORE RESOURCES TO HELP WITH COMMUNITY GARDENING:

- **Groundwork Milwaukee's Urban Garden Network (MUG)** manages over 90 gardens throughout Milwaukee. The MUG Network builds community partnerships and streamlines the process for creating community gardens on City land.
- The **Milwaukee County Cooperative Extension** rents garden plots in many parts of the county and provides

technical assistance to neighborhood groups that run their own community gardens.

- Victory Garden Initiative's **BLITZ Program** gathers volunteers to install raised garden beds filled with Blue Ribbon Organics' healthy, compost-based soil. Anyone can get a garden. Reach out to see if your neighborhood qualifies for a discounted bed.



NATURAL LAWN CARE, NATIVE LANDSCAPING & RAIN GARDENS

Natural lawn care means growing a healthy lawn without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. These products are dangerous to the environment because after it rains they flow into streams, rivers, and lakes, creating pollution and damaging vital ecosystems. In addition, pesticides target not only the pest species, but other insects—like bees—that are helpful for our plants. By using natural products, you are working with nature, not against it.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by hosting information sessions about non-natural vs. natural lawn care. Find helpful information to share below:

- Most lawns require 1-2 inches of water each week in the summer. Water deeply in the morning and when it is not windy.
- Only cut the top one-third of the total height of grass while mowing. Allowing grass to grow taller allows for

better root development that limits weeds and helps your yard absorb more water.

- Leave grass clippings on the lawn to nourish the soil as fertilizer, compost them, or take them to a **Drop Off Disposal Center**.
- Use a slow release fertilizer instead of one that dissolves in water—it should be labeled “water-soluble.” **Milorganite** is a local environmental option. Only apply fertilizer when there is no rain in the forecast to avoid runoff into the sewage system.

Residents can also incorporate **native landscaping** in their yard to create a beautiful green space that helps collect rain. Native plants have deep growing root systems that help break up soil, allowing more water to drain into the ground. Landscaping with native plants helps create a habitat for local birds, bees, and butterflies.

In natural gardens, you do not have to mow, water, or purchase plants as often. Plus, you use fewer chemicals to eliminate pests or promote growth, which translates into cleaner water and cleaner air for you, your children, pets, and neighbors.

Native plants can also be used to create **rain gardens**, small, shallow areas filled with plants that support local pollinators, protect the water supply, and save money by preventing flooding. Rain gardens capture and filter 30% more water from storms than traditional lawns. This is important because stormwater runoff increases flooding, carries pollutants from streets, parking lots, and even lawns to local streams and lakes, and leads to expensive municipal improvements in stormwater treatment. Rain gardens are a great way for homeowners, schools, businesses, churches, and other organizations to help protect our lakes and streams.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood to encourage native landscaping and rain garden use by hosting informational sessions and planting days. Use workshop materials and potential speaker contacts provided by the UW Extension **Natural Resources Education Program** and the Department of Natural Resource's **Rain Gardens: A Guide for Homeowners and Landscapers**. For specific questions about planting natives, reach out to the **Fresh Coast Resource Center**. Find a full list of locations for native plants sales on the Department of Natural Resources **website**.

The City offers the following programs to fund neighborhood improvements that increase green space. Learn more and apply for support on your projects:

- The **Community Improvement Project** offers reimbursable matching grants that should stimulate resident engagement and support sustainable projects within a small geographical area. Past projects have included green infrastructure, raised garden beds, health equity murals, and other beautification efforts.

- The **Healing Spaces Initiative** helps residents build relaxing natural environments on available, City-owned vacant lots while, at the same time, eliminating blighted spaces and engaging residents. Amenities include flower gardens, solar lights, shade sails, and Little Free Libraries.
- Bloom & Groom is a community beautification program. The City partners with neighborhood organizations to host annual flower sale distribution events around Milwaukee at the beginning of each spring season. The objective of Bloom & Groom is to both beautify neighborhoods with flowers planted at homes and to build positive cooperation among residents. The City works with community partners and local vendors to provide the flowers at a discounted price.

The Urban Ecology Center offers Botany Walks, and numerous volunteer opportunities, that help you familiarize yourself with Wisconsin's plant life as well as workshops on native landscaping for your yard. In addition, they host a native plant sale at all three branch locations in the spring making accessibility to these plants easy and affordable. **Information can be found on their website.**



TREE PLANTING

Trees are a good neighborhood investment. They increase property values for many homes, help lower energy bills by creating shade, block noise pollution, and have important health and social benefits. Trees also help take pollutants out of the air.

Milwaukee loses trees each year due to severe storms, disease outbreak such as the Dutch elm disease, and invasive species like the Emerald Ash Borer Beetle.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood to help grow the City's tree canopy. Talk to community members and gauge interest for tree planting events. Support your neighbors by offering supplies and other resources people need.

Set up a community group for tree planting or maintenance and consult with the **Milwaukee Water Commons' Branch Out Milwaukee Program**. Through the Branch Out Milwaukee Campaign, neighbors can work together alongside other community organizations to

preserve trees and learn more about their importance as the foundation of a healthy neighborhood.

The Arbor Day Foundation is a non-profit conservation and education organization with a million members and partners worldwide. It offers affordable trees and seedlings, as well as planting and care guides and free landscape guides. **Find educational materials to determine your hardiness zone and decide what trees are the best option**. Milwaukee homeowners can also adopt a tree through **Greening Milwaukee**. You can receive one FREE tree per season if your yard has enough space.



POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY PRACTICES

Pollinators like bees and butterflies transfer pollen that produces the fruits, nuts, and vegetables we consume. When native areas are replaced by roadways, manicured lawns, and non-native gardens, pollinators lose the food and nesting areas they need to survive. Monarch butterflies are especially vulnerable to habitat loss, with many dying in the longer migration distances they must travel to find suitable areas.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by hosting informational sessions on the importance of pollinators and how to keep them safe. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources offers free **educational materials**, as well as **information on where to find native plant sales and webinars on native landscaping**.

Encourage neighbors to use products that target specific pests rather than broad spectrum ones. Avoid anything labeled toxic to bees or that kills “weedy” flowers—the ones that pollinators visit. Specifically avoid products that include **neonicotinoids**. Only use organic or natural

pest deterrents, and spray at night when it is dry, windless, and while flowers are not blooming.

Milkweed is one plant that supports monarchs, as well as other pollinators. Female monarch butterflies only lay their eggs on milkweed. Encourage your neighborhood to plant native milkweed species as recommended by the **National Wildlife Federation**. Milwaukee joined other cities across the nation in the Mayor’s Monarch Pledge, which supports the **Pollinator Garden Challenge**. Encourage your neighbors to join the 1 million people across the country in creating a pollinator garden, and have them register their garden on the nationwide map.

WASTE CLEANUP

Project Clean and Green is a city-wide program designed to foster neighborhood pride and ownership through coordinated clean-up. Collection crews will target one zone of the city each week and collect up to six cubic yards per property of unwanted furniture, mattresses or household items, and garden/yard debris in paper yard waste bags. Items are collected on regular garbage collection days.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by reminding neighbors of your Clean and Green collection week or by hosting your own neighborhood cleanup to raise awareness about litter and pollution. **Register online as a site coordinator in advance to host a cleanup and reserve supplies**. Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful supplies bags and loans tools to groups hosting cleanups from March 1–October 31 of each year.

You can even reserve a Mobile Tool Shed for large cleanups. **Request a dumpster from Sanitation Services for your neighborhood cleanup**.

You can also organize neighbors to join an existing community cleanup or beautification event in the Greater Milwaukee Area. Visit the **Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful Calendar** to find the dates, locations and contact information for each cleanup. The calendar is updated as site coordinators register their cleanups.



How to Contribute Less Waste to the Landfill

When organic materials break down in a landfill, they produce a landfill gas made up of methane and carbon dioxide. Landfills produce the third-largest source of human-related methane emissions in the U.S. Landfills also take up a lot of space that was once habitat for wildlife.

REDUCE

The best way to manage waste is to not produce it. Buy durable goods that are well-built or offer good warranties. These last longer, save you money, and help keep items out of the landfill. If possible, buy commonly used items in bulk and try to purchase items with minimal packaging or recyclable packaging.

Avoid single-use plastics, like straws, utensils, bags, plates, and water bottles. Instead, use reusable or compostable options. **Plastic-Free MKE** is a local resource that offers education, advocacy, and support for restaurants and events to eliminate single-use plastics in the city.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood by working with Plastic-Free MKE to inform residents of methods for smart consumption and encourage businesses in the area to become **Lake Friendly**. A Lake Friendly business offers reusable tableware and no styrofoam, practices proper recycling, and provides compostable options for takeout.

Conduct a neighborhood self-assessment using the **Sustainable Consumption Toolkit** created by the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. Host trash audits with neighbors by instructing them to collect all their trash, recyclables, and compostable items for a period of time to analyze what type of waste is being created at home. Then, identify a plan for reducing garbage produced each month.

Encourage neighbors to take part in Milwaukee Recycles' **Refuse Challenge**. In addition to reducing, reusing, and recycling, neighbors can refuse disposable items from the start. This includes carrying a travel mug for coffee, bringing reusable bags to the grocery store, bringing your own utensils and containers for takeout, carrying a

reusable water bottle, and reducing marketing swag.

Parties and community events are a great way to bring neighbors together to host workshops, rain barrel paintings, or informational stations.

If you are organizing a residential block party, you will need to request a free and temporary permit with the approval of your alderperson. **Request the permit online at least two weeks out from your event.** You will also need to obtain signatures of consent from residents within the barricaded area of the street. Consider distributing informational fliers at least one week out to remind your neighbors of the event. If your event will include food, music, or alcohol, you will need **additional permits**.

Milwaukee is proud to be the City of Festivals, but often times our public events leave our streets and waterways littered with plastic and debris, posing serious threats to the environment and our health. The new **City of Milwaukee Green Events Guide** can help you take the first steps towards a conscious community event that protects the environment.

REUSE & REPAIR

Think about how you can swap out single-use items for items that can be used over and over again. For example, switch to a reusable water bottle or shopping bags in place of plastic options. Instead of buying something new, consider if a neighbor, family member, or local store might have something gently used you can try instead. Reusing items keeps them out of the landfill and saves you money. Part of reusing involves making repairs where necessary.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood with **Landfill Diversion Ideas** from Milwaukee Recycles. Hold a community garage sale weekend for neighbors to coordinate their sales, increase participation, and grow community networking. Anything not sold during the weekend can be listed online for resale on apps like **Freecycle** or donated to local charities.

Encourage neighbors to share items. Work together as a community to create a program to build, decorate and stock your neighborhood's own **Little Free Library** for sharing media items. You can also promote a tool-lending network in your neighborhood and take advantage of Milwaukee's **Tool Loan Program**. The Tool Loan Center

stocks a variety of hand and power tools, all of which are available to City of Milwaukee homeowners. Sign up for a small annual membership fee and save on the cost of tools.

Host a **Fix It Clinic** where neighbors can bring their broken objects for volunteers to repair. Items might include computers, clothing, furniture, bicycles, or toys. Recruit volunteers who are professionals with repair businesses or just tinkerers. Ask a venue like a public library, community center, maker space, or repair clinic to host the event—and don't forget to advertise! The **Wisconsin Bike Federation** also operates a mobile bike repair program that trains and employs young people to repair bikes for free in underserved communities. Get your neighbors involved with the program.

RECYCLE & COMPOST

Recycling allows new products to be made from the old through reprocessing and remanufacturing. Recycling is good for the environment, supports local jobs, and saves the City money that covers the costs associated with disposal. It is required by the law in Wisconsin and under City Ordinance in Milwaukee. Paper, bottles, and cans must be recycled at home, at work, at school, at places of worship, and at public events.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by conducting recycling outreach. Share information with neighbors about how to recycle. Consider including this information in a "Welcome to the Neighborhood" packet from your Neighborhood Association. Distribute Milwaukee Recycles' **Curbside Recycling Guide**, available in three languages.

Help inform residents or organize large collections of more difficult recyclable materials. Plastic bags and film can be dropped off at locations like grocery stores. Scrap metal, appliances, antifreeze, car batteries, used motor oil and filters, tires, electronics, cooking oil, curbside recyclables, and large corrugated cardboard can be brought to the City of Milwaukee's **Drop Off Centers**.

Gather a group of interested neighbors to **tour the Materials Recovery Facility** and see where recyclables go. Free adult tours are available twice a month, and school group programs are also available. Additional educational programming is available from **Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful** on a variety of environmental topics for all ages.

Neighbors that don't have a recycling program or have bins that are overflowing should be instructed to contact their landlord or property manager. Anonymous complaints may also be filed by calling 1-414-286-CITY (2489). If neighbors need help recycling additional or unusual items, **Earth911** offers recycling solutions. Milwaukee Recycles also has a **Recycling Directory** so residents can search what items are not accepted at the curbside and where they should go.



Milwaukee Recycles is the city's local recycling program. The City provides recycling services to all 1-4 family residences and some condominiums, but apartments and condo buildings with 5+ units, businesses, organizations and other institutions must provide their own recycling services.

When organic waste breaks down in landfills, it produces methane gas, which is more potent than carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. Composting is an easy, inexpensive alternative to landfills that puts organic waste to use to help create healthy soil and releases little to no methane in the process.

Wisconsin law prohibits disposal of yard materials in landfills. Yard materials or yard waste includes leaves, grass clippings, brush, and any pieces of wood (branches, etc.) under 6 inches in diameter.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by offering education about the composting process and local resources. There are three main ways to compost:

- 1) Use individual compost bins in your home or apartment,
- 2) Participate in a curbside organics collection service, or
- 3) Collect waste and take it to a drop off site.

Inform residents about the many different ways to compost in their backyard, including hot and cold composting, vermicomposting, and grasscycling. Find more information on composting in Milwaukee on the [Department of Public Works website](#). The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources also provides information on its [Composting in Wisconsin page](#).

Create a workshop to make home composters. There are a number of home composting containers for sale or it is simple for neighbors to create their own. Reference the DNR's [Home Composting: The Complete Composter](#) guide for help. Neighbors can also purchase compost bins through the Department of Public Works [annual spring sale](#).

If backyard composting isn't preferred, neighbors can use a subscription-based organics collection service like [Compost Crusader](#), [Kompost Kids](#), or [Waste Not](#). Neighbors simply place a bucket or bin full of compost on the curb for regular collection as they do recycling and garbage.

Your neighborhood can also collaborate with other existing community gardens and organizations for workshops and demonstrations. You can work with [Compost Crusader](#) to get compost at local schools, businesses, and other locations, or to conduct a [near-zero waste event](#).

THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE OFFERS THE FOLLOWING FREE SERVICES TO SUPPORT COMPOSING:

Free leaf collection service is offered in the fall. Residents are asked to rake their leaves into curb lanes for collection to be composted. You can include yard debris on top of leaf piles, but do not bag these organic materials. An alternative to this service is leaf mulching, or shredding leaves with a lawn mower to allow the nutrients to return right to the soil. **Brush collection** can also be requested from April-November.

The **City of Milwaukee Drop Off Centers** allow for the safe disposal and recycling of a wide variety of items, including compostable items. Fees do apply and are based on the volume of the load. Drop Off Centers are located at 3879 W. Lincoln Ave. and 6660 N. Industrial Rd. and are open from 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday during the winter and Tuesday through Sunday in the summer.





WATER

An ECO-Neighborhood is one that reduces its environmental impact on our water system—the hydrosphere. Climate change will cause water resources worldwide to become unstable due to increased water demand and shrinking water supply. Increased rainfall in the region will lead to greater flooding that contaminates our waterways.

Focus on neighborhood action that preserves our clean drinking water. The average American consumes 1 to 2 liters of drinking water per day. By using our water resources wisely, we ensure that water does not contain unsafe levels of contaminants that can cause negative health effects such as gastrointestinal illness, nervous system effects, or chronic diseases such as cancer.

GOOD NEWS | We are fortunate to be a part of the Great Lakes Basin, which contains 20% of the world's fresh surface water supply. Located on Lake Michigan, Milwaukee is a **Water Centric City** that practices global leadership in managing our water resources.

HOW TO TAKE ACTION:



Keep Pollutants out of the Water

- River Cleanup
- Salt Pollution
- Lead Exposure
- Hazardous Waste Pollution



Conserve Water & Manage Stormwater

- Responsible Water Use
- Green Infrastructure
- Reducing Sewer Overflows



How to Keep Pollutants Out of the Water

Protecting drinking water and aquatic life requires limiting or eliminating toxins and pollutants from entering waterways. A sustainable water supply is also one that can meet the requirements of quality and quantity over the long term. This requires properly treating water at the source and delivering it safely to the public through both public water mains and private property service lines.

RIVER CLEANUP

Trash gets into our rivers in a lot of different ways: stormwater runoff, littering, strong winds, or illegal dumping. Lots of different trash can be found in our rivers, like tires, bottles, wrappers, and straws. All types of waste can impact aquatic life, no matter how small.

Waste and debris can also enter our waterways through storm drains. If not cleared, material blocking the drain can also result in street flooding and present a safety hazard. Remember: If it isn't rain, it doesn't belong in the drain.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by taking part in the **Milwaukee Riverkeeper Adopt-A-River Program**. Gather neighbors and sign up to adopt sections of Milwaukee waterways with the commitment of cleaning the area two times each year. Milwaukee Riverkeeper will set adoptees up with supplies, like gloves and trash bags.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper also organizes an **Annual Spring River Cleanup**. Gather a group of neighborhood volunteers and register online to pick up trash at one of the many community sites across the city. You will be provided with gloves, bags, and free t-shirts for taking part. Your neighborhood can also take part in other **public cleanup events regularly listed online**. You can also get involved as a volunteer with the **water monitoring program**.

The Waterway Restoration Partnership is a group of long-standing community partners working to clean up the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic Rivers, as well as Lake Michigan. Get your neighbors involved and stay up to date on progress to create habitat, remove invasive plants and animals, plant vegetation, and reduce pollution in our waterways to support healthier fish and wildlife and improve recreational opportunities.

Encourage neighbors to take part in the **Adopt Your Drain Program**. Register online to adopt a nearby storm drain and commit to clearing and caring for it regularly. Report on pollution. Milwaukee Riverkeeper advocates for compliance with environmental laws, responds to complaints from community members, identifies problems within our geographic area and helps provide solutions to address these problems. If neighbors witness any kind of river-related environmental abuse, encourage them to **report it online**.

SALT POLLUTION

Once you put salt down, it doesn't go away. Instead, it travels into our lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands, putting our aquatic life at risk and endangering our freshwater resources. It only takes one teaspoon of salt to pollute up to 5 gallons of water to a level that is toxic to freshwater organisms.

Over 525,000 tons of salt, or sodium chloride, are applied to Wisconsin roadways each winter. This is enough to pollute over 400 billion gallons of Wisconsin's water. The City of Milwaukee's Operations Department is working to train staff on best management practices.

Additional sources of salt are applied to farm fields and used in water softeners. ALL of these salts end up in our fresh water. 47 Wisconsin rivers and lakes have been officially designated as impaired due to high salt concentrations, 30 of which are in the Lake Michigan watershed. The salt that isn't transported directly to surface water is accumulating in our soils and groundwater.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by offering neighbors education on how to reduce salt in our waterways. Some easy winter tips include:

- 1) **Shovel:** Use a scraper, shovel or broom to clear walkways before the snow turns to ice. The more snow you can remove manually, the less salt you will have to use and the more effective it will be.
- 2) **Scatter:** Scatter salt so that there is space between grains. A hand spreader can help. A 12 oz. cup of salt is enough to treat a 20-foot driveway or 10 sidewalk squares.
- 3) **Switch:** Regular salt won't work when temperatures drop below 15 degrees. Use sand for traction or a different deicer that works at colder temperatures.
- 4) **Sweep:** Sweep up excess salt after ice has melted so that it doesn't wash into storm drains and into our local waterways.



WI Salt Wise is a coalition of organizations working together to reduce salt pollution in our lakes, streams, and drinking water that offers resources. Your neighborhood can start a Sweep the Salt campaign to remove extra salt before it ends up in our waterways. Neighbors can also encourage local schools and businesses to send their staff and contractors to a free **Smart Salting Training**.

Neighbors can also get involved with Milwaukee Riverkeeper's local **Road Salt Monitoring Program**. Road salt monitors are needed to help collect data. Sampling typically takes place 48 hours after events that trigger road salt use, such as large snowfalls and snowmelts.

LEAD EXPOSURE

Lead is a metal that was once used in different materials both inside and outside of our homes, including paint, plumbing materials, and gasoline. Because there is no safe level of lead, it is important to reduce the chance of exposure as much as possible, especially for infants, young children, and pregnant women. Inside and outside of homes, there are primary sources of lead exposure to be aware of, including lead paint, drinking water, and soil.

Milwaukee's source of drinking water does not have lead in it. The lead that is found in drinking water is a result of lead service lines and internal plumbing with sources of lead. Milwaukee's water chemistry allows us to effectively treat our water with orthophosphate, which forms a protective barrier on the inside of pipes that prevents lead from leaching into the water. As a result, Milwaukee's water is well below federal limits for lead. Nevertheless, there is no safe level of lead, and Milwaukee is working as quickly as possible to replace all lead service lines.

Milwaukee Water Works started systematically replacing lead service lines in 2017. Milwaukee faces continued challenges of limited funding and contractor capacity needed to replace the remaining active residential lead service lines in the city.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood to reduce lead exposure by educating neighbors and offering resources.

The Milwaukee Health Department offers helpful information, including soil testing. For lead in water, the **Milwaukee Water Works offers additional information**, and advises residents to take the following steps:

- 1) Determine if the property has a lead service line. **Look up the home's address in the City's lead service line records.**
- 2) Find out if the lead service line is scheduled for replacement. Call the Lead Service Line Replacement Program at 1-414-286-2803. If it is not scheduled for replacement, residents can replace the lead service line on their own. Ask the Lead Service Line Replacement Program for a list of plumbing contractors. The City of Milwaukee will pay for the public half of the line, from the curb to the water main.

- 3) Test your water for lead through **Northern Lake Service**, a state-certified water testing lab, for a small cost.

- 4) Pick up a free water pitcher from the Milwaukee Health Department or Milwaukee Water Works.

Advocate as part of the **Coalition on Lead Emergency (COLE)**, a collective of community-based advocacy organizations, environmental groups, educators, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood groups, to create a sustainable, lead-safe environment in Milwaukee. COLE focuses on community education about lead, workforce development efforts to bring more people into careers that work on eliminating lead risks, advocacy directed at federal, state, and local policy makers, and the organization of parents and families directly impacted by lead poisoning. Attend monthly meetings, advocate for funding, tell your story, and attend training sessions on lead risks.

HAZARDOUS WASTE POLLUTION

Hazardous waste is a subset of solid waste that must be managed to protect human health and the environment. Federal and state laws regulate how facilities such as businesses, institutions, governments, and other non-households must manage hazardous waste. Households should also be mindful of how they dispose of hazardous waste such as pesticides, gasoline, batteries, and cleaners to keep our land and water clean and safe.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood to educate residents about what items are considered hazardous waste and

how to dispose of them properly. **MMSD offers both permanent and mobile sites for collection**, as well as a flyers with information about what items can be disposed through these sites.



How to Conserve Water & Manage Stormwater

Wisconsin has abundant water resources that are the foundation for safe drinking water, recreational opportunities, and economic activity. We must protect this resource through water conservation and efficient use. Cities have made tremendous progress in improving water quality by focusing on point-source pollution but now face the more difficult task of reducing polluted stormwater runoff from streets, parking lots, and other forms of nonpoint-source pollution. Understanding the connection between land use and water quality is critical to improving our waterways.

RESPONSIBLE WATER USE

Sewer charges are based on the amount of water that passes through your water meter, whether you consumed the water or it dripped, leaked, or was wasted down the drain. In a survey of Milwaukee Water Works customers who tested their plumbing for leaks, the biggest leakers were toilets at 46%. A toilet that runs all day and night will waste 200 gallons per day at an additional cost of about \$206.00 each year.

Large fluctuations in use could indicate leaks. Expect increased water use during warm weather months if you water your lawn or garden, fill a pool, or wash your car frequently. Most leaks are easy to repair with parts from a hardware store, or with a call to a plumber.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood by providing residents with information on how to reduce water leaks and overall water use. The Milwaukee Water Works offers a [Use Water Wisely Program](#) to help residents save money, reduce water waste, and conserve our Lake Michigan water resource.

Reference the [Milwaukee Water Works brochure](#) on using water wisely to control costs. Some helpful tips include watering lawns during the coolest parts of the day, hand washing dishes in a sink full of soapy water, and replacing fixtures and appliances with those displaying the EPA WaterSense label or Energy Star label. One of the simplest ways to save both water and energy is to install water-efficient products.

Go even further with your water education. Each year, the [Milwaukee Water Commons Water School](#) engages

community members in a year-long commitment to our waterways. Neighborhood leaders ages 16 and up are encouraged to take part in a process that includes water education, cross-community relationship building, art-making, and team project development. Participants learn how water moves through communities and how individual actions impact the health of our waters.

Find additional water information and interactive resources for your neighborhood with the [Milwaukee Community Map](#), a free online tool that uses the power of Google Earth to visualize stories around the theme of water and community.

Adults can also take part in the [Beach Ambassador Project](#) to make money while effectively communicating Lake Michigan beach conditions and increasing awareness and knowledge among the general public to prevent further unnecessary drownings.



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green infrastructure is a cost-effective, resilient approach to managing stormwater in dense urban landscapes. It is inspired by natural processes that mimic ecosystem services rather than attempting to control nature. Green Infrastructure includes strategies such as installing [rain barrels](#), [rain gardens](#), [porous pavement](#), [bioswales](#), [green roofs](#), and [natural landscaping](#).

Green infrastructure practices allow stormwater to contribute to a functioning watershed that resides within the urban landscape, unlike gray infrastructure—conventional piped drainage such as storm drains—which is designed to move stormwater away from the urban landscape.

In 2017, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) created the [Fresh Coast Resource Center](#) to empower homeowners, businesses, nonprofits, and the government to take an active role in protecting our most precious natural resource: water. By helping our community protect our rivers and Lake Michigan, we work to achieve our goal of capturing the first 0.5 inches of rainfall in our service area. This helps keep excess water out of our sewers, which helps prevent [sewer overflows](#) and reduces runoff pollution. By capturing water, we protect our waterways, keep flooding from being someone else's headache downstream, and reduce the risk of basement backups.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

Organize in your neighborhood to increase green infrastructure and manage stormwater. Installing rain barrels as well as rain gardens are easy ways for neighbors to act. Rain barrels capture and store rainwater from your roof for later use in activities like watering your yard or washing your car. Your barrel should be located close to a downspout, near the area you will use it, and on a solid and level surface.

Create a workshop for installing rain barrels. Visit MMSD's website for [how-to guides on purchasing and preparing your rain barrel](#). You can receive a FREE rain barrel from MMSD when you attend a rain barrel workshop. [Encourage neighbors to sign up as a group online](#).

Hold an event for painting the rain barrels and encourage designs that represent your community.

Contact the online Fresh Coast Resource Center for funding opportunities, education, and tools to create successful green infrastructure strategies. Another resource is [Reflo](#), a nonprofit organization focused on education, research, and implementation of water projects. Each year, Reflo works to support and catalyze community green infrastructure projects that harvest stormwater for urban agriculture or other uses. Work with them on water management in your neighborhood. You can also reference the [Reflo Rainwater Harvesting Guide](#) to make use of rainwater as an alternative and low-cost water source for urban gardening while managing stormwater.



SEWER OVERFLOWS

Downspouts are the external pipes of a house that carry rainwater from the roof to a drain or the ground. During heavy rain, every downspout on your home can send 12 gallons of water a minute to the sewer system. This increases the risk of expensive basement backups and sewer overflows. Disconnecting downspouts helps keep extra water out of sewers.

Before disconnecting, ensure you have enough green space in your yard to drain water into the ground naturally without creating water problems for your neighbors or icy conditions on sidewalks, driveways, or roads.

During major storms and heavy rains, water use is especially important, as excess water can overwhelm Milwaukee's sanitary sewer system and cause overflows into our waterways. Thanks to Deep Tunnels and other improvements, Milwaukee averages 2.3 overflows per year (down from 50-60 a year) and has captured and cleaned 98.5% of all water that's entered the regional sewer system since 1994.

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District has taken an innovative approach to reducing water pollution from sewer overflows by issuing **Water Drop Alerts™** when large storms and heavy rains threaten the area. By using less water, you're helping reduce the amount of sewage that might end up in the environment if there is an overflow.



HOW TO ORGANIZE

You can organize in your neighborhood by talking with your neighbors and organizing a disconnection day. Hook up the disconnection to rain barrels for later water use. Downspout disconnection involves cutting the downspout, attaching an elbow and extension to direct the stormwater flow away from the house onto a grassy area, and capping the standpipe. **[Find detailed disconnection instructions on the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District website.](#)**

Organize in your neighborhood by informing residents of how to sign up for Water Drop Alerts and reduce sewage overflow in Lake Michigan. Neighbors can sign up by texting "WATERDROP" to 414-296-4422. Once an alert is issued, encourage neighbors to use less water until the rain passes. Hold off on washing dishes, dry the laundry tomorrow if there is a heavy rain today, take a shorter shower, and empty your rain barrel if you have one.

